



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Don't get burned buying firewood, get a receipt

OLYMPIA – To protect the many Washington residents who are defrauded each year by firewood sellers, the state Department of Agriculture (WSDA) today advised consumers to take steps to ensure they get what they pay for.

To protect yourself, ask for a receipt. Washington law requires wood sellers to provide an invoice that shows the name and address of both the buyer and the seller and the date delivered. The invoice should also state the price, the quantity delivered, the quantity upon which the price is based, and the type and quality of the wood.

“Most people complain because they get less wood than they paid for, or because they are not satisfied with the quality of the wood,” said Jerry Buendel, manager of the Weights and Measures Program. “And, many times they are right! Some people lose hundreds of dollars.”

The legal measure for firewood in Washington is the cord or a fraction of a cord. Sellers often deceive buyers with terms such as “unit,” “truckload,” “face cord,” “rick” or “pile.” These terms have no legal definition and cannot, therefore, be used as a measure for the amount of firewood being sold.

A cord is 128 cubic feet. To be sure you have a cord, stack the wood neatly by placing the wood in a line or a row, with individual pieces touching and parallel to each other. Make sure the wood is compact and has as few gaps as possible. Finally, measure the stack. If the width times the height times the length equals 128 cubic feet, you have a cord of firewood. If there is a problem, contact the seller before you burn any wood.

“While wood stacked in a crisscross or log cabin fashion is secure and will stand freely, it does not meet the legal definition,” Buendel said. “Most likely the stack will contain less wood than one that is stacked by the legal parallel method. If a wood vendor balks at providing a receipt with a legal measurement, it could be a hint that you are being shorted. Consumers should also know that there are no legal definitions for terms such as ‘seasoned,’ ‘dry’ or ‘cured’.”

For best results, be present for the delivery and take time to inspect the firewood before it’s unloaded. “If you’re not satisfied with the quality, refuse the load or negotiate a new price,” Buendel adds.

For information or assistance, call the state Department of Agriculture at (360) 902-1857.

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